



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Community Living

Award of a Single-Source Supplement for the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment

ACTION: Announcing the Intent to Award a Single-Source Supplement for the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment (NCBOE).

SUMMARY: The Administration for Community Living (ACL) announces the intent to award a single-source supplemental to the current cooperative agreement held by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) for the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment (NCBOE). The purpose of the NCBOE is to provide technical assistance to states, Area Agencies on Aging, Aging and Disability Resource Centers and service providers who conduct outreach and low-income benefits enrollment assistance, particularly to older individuals with greatest economic need for federal and state programs. The administrative supplement for FY 2021 will be for \$3,009,007, bringing the total award for FY 2021 to \$14,509,007.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information or comments regarding this program supplement, contact Margaret Flowers, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Integrated Programs, Office of Healthcare Information and Counseling; telephone (202) 795-7315; e-mail Margaret.flowers@acl.hhs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

This supplemental funding will expand the NCBOE's outreach and education efforts targeting older adults with the greatest economic need, especially people from underserved communities. The NCBOE will build on current efforts to reach and assist beneficiaries, including expanding the work of the Benefits Enrollment Centers, making enhancements to the benefits eligibility and screening tool, and expanding the capacity of the benefits call center. As part of this work, the

NCBOE should consider specific strategies to reach and enroll beneficiaries in rural communities, who are under 65, with limited English proficiency, from tribal communities, from communities of color, and/or from other historically underserved and marginalized communities. In its role as the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) Resource Center, the NCBOE should expand their support for the MIPPA grantees to develop technical assistance materials for the Older Americans Act Title VI Tribal grantees. Materials may include educational content on Medicare and the Indian Health Service, and training on enrollment assistance for low income beneficiaries. Additionally, the NCBOE should build on the work previously done to support the aging and disability networks (including the Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living, and Aging and Disability Resource Centers) in their efforts to help low income beneficiaries.

The NCBOE works to utilize cost-effective strategies to find older individuals and people with disabilities with greatest economic need and facilitate their enrollment in the individuals in the programs for which they are qualified. As part of this effort, the NCBOE should support state and federal efforts to streamline benefits eligibility systems. This should include conducting a feasibility assessment to determine best ways to streamline the application process and centralize the eligibility guidelines for key benefits, including the automation of enrollment through a rules engine. The study should explore the governance structure and technical expertise necessary to create and maintain such a process. Additionally, it should explore what a realistic scope is for the project how the current benefits screening tools could evolve to benefit from further automation of eligibility. NCBOE should collaborate with ACL and the administration in conducting the feasibility assessment to coordinate with planned and emerging efforts to streamline eligibility benefits for low income individuals.

Program Name: The National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment (NCBOE)

Recipient: National Council on Aging (NCOA)

Period of Performance: The award will be issued for the current project period of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022.

Total Award Amount: \$14,509,007 in FY 2021

Award Type: Cooperative Agreement Supplement

Statutory Authority: The statutory authority is contained in the 2006 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, as amended by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, and reauthorized by the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014, Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, and Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

BASIS FOR AWARD: The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is currently funded to carry out the NCBOE Project for the period of September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2025. Much work has already been completed and further tasks are currently being accomplished. It would be unnecessarily time consuming and disruptive to the NCBOE project and the beneficiaries being served for the ACL to establish a new grantee at this time when critical services are presently being provided in an efficient manner.

NCOA is uniquely placed to complete the work under the NCBOE grant. Since 2001, NCOA has been the national leader in improving benefits access to vulnerable older adults. They have an unparalleled history of working with community-based organizations to develop and replicate outreach and enrollment solutions, while maintaining and enhancing technology to make it easier and more efficient to find benefits. NCOA through NCBOE accomplishes its mission by developing and sharing tools, resources, best practices, and strategies for benefits outreach and enrollment via its online clearinghouse, electronic and print publications, webinars, and training and technical assistance.

In addition, NCOA has BenefitsCheckUp which is, by far, the nation's most comprehensive and widely-used web-based service that screens older and disabled adults with limited incomes and

resources and informs them about public and private benefits for which they are very likely to be eligible. Since the BenefitsCheckUp was launched in 2001, nearly 9.5 million people have discovered \$39.5 billion in benefits. In addition to the focus on Low-Income Subsidy and Medicare Savings Programs, BenefitsCheckUp also includes more than 2,500 benefits programs from all 50 states and DC, including over 50,000 local offices for people to apply for benefits; and more than 1,500 application forms in every language in which they are available. NCOA is successfully meeting all programmatic goals under the current NCBOE grant.

Date: April 19, 2021.

Alison Barkoff,
Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging and Administrator.

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